29 May 2014

**Time**: 2:00 pm - 4: 00 Pm

**Venue**: SofOmar Meeting room, ILRI campus, Addis Ababa

**Attendes:** Kindu Mekonnen (ILRI\Africa RISING), Melkamu Bezabih (ILRI), Aberra Adie (ILRI), Tilahun Amede (ICRISAT), Annet Mulema (ILRI), Elias Damtew (ILRI), Steffen Schulz (CIP), Ewen Le Borgne (ILRI), Meron Mulatu (ILRI), Job Kihara (CIAT), Alan Duncan (ILRI), Lulseged Tamene (CIAT), Jane Wamatu (ICARDA)

+ on Skype: Aster Gebrekirstos (ICRAF), Eliud Birachi (CIAT), Mohammed Ebrahim (ILRI\Africa RISING), Rolf Sommer (CIAT), Temesgen Alene (ILRI\Africa RISING).

**Meeting Agenda Items**

1. Farmers research group identification for crop–livestock protocols
2. Progress update from CG partners
3. Next plan
4. AOB

**Agenda item 1:  Farmers research group identification for crop-livestock protocols**

Prsentation by Dr. Kindu (link it)....

* Q: Why did the protocols specify such low level numbers (e.g. 1 farmer / crop)? Participatory varietal selection with one farmer sounds a bit odd…
* A: The idea is that these new varieties are demonstrated in each kebele and demos involve larger amounts of farmers. Commodity groups will demonstrate and evaluate these varieties at scale. A community-based seed production process is expected in each kebele. The final reason is that we have limited financial and human resources to conduct these trials in a dozen of sites…
* Q: Is this about participatory variety selection or seed production?
* A: Those are two different activities…
* Q: We have farmers who have showed interest but given their interest, we will likely go for protocols with e.g. free inputs. Some of these protocols may not provide such immediate incentives. I expect we might encounter some challenge and some farmers may shy away. From our site, farmers are willing but may not have the resources, the type of land(scape) that fits our research protocol. Should we go to the 30-40 farmers and see who fits our expectations?
* A: We have identified farmer groups and have 40-50 farmers to do the refined work. Coordinators will move around the kebeles and check if these farmers fit the criteria.

Comment Aberra:

* Many farmers were involved in the evaluation of potatoes and Belete is the best performing one and many farmers want to plant it. …When we go back there, if we don’t address the potato issue we will face a problem.
* Seeds, fertilizers need to be in place without being late from the farming season
* Potatoes: limited no of farmers in the two kebles – many farmers were involved. Belete is the best performing potato and many farmers want to plant Belete breed
* Farmers want to have seed for this meher season – and they need a seed source

**Agenda item 2:  Progress update from different CG centers**

**CIP**

* Covered in terms of planning for next planting season in the previous section.

**Eliud**

* Value chain study will be shared in the next week or so. What is in the protocol is informed by the value chain assessment (e.g. issue of seeds coming through).

**CIAT**

* We need automatic weather data and a MET station can record all kinds of data (humidity, rainfall). We need this for modeling and to relate soil moisture with basic weather data… We are looking into soil fertility constraints, long term assessment of soil fertility in relation with crop management options in rotation.
  + Tilahun: We tried to set up MET stations in the Nile Basin Development Challenge but it took us 8 months to get the material and the agreement from the State Ministry was that the data wouldn’t be shared with anyone. So try and get the bureaucratic process soonest.
* We are finalizing all contract details, individual budgets etc. A request to purchase met stations has been placed and hopefully ILRI will process this.
* CIAT has proposed 3.5 protocols. In Tigray and D/Birhan farmers are identified. In Hosana all procedures being looked into. Also trying to purchase equipment.

**ICRAF**

* Fruit trees: Original plan to choose 30-40 farmers per site and in the end went for 40 farmers per kebele. Bought 600 seedlings.
* In D.Birhan site, high interest and we’ll distribute 10 seedlings / farmer. We expect similar interest from Sinana and Tigray.
* Required training on site etc. before the planting season. In Hosana, training started today and Aklilu is there to prepare some information for the background data collection.
* For motivation, we want farmers to meet and discuss with other investors and other farmers that have tried this out. We’ll organize similar training in D/Birhan. Next step is to train on propagation technique.
* We are raising 600 avocado seedlings as a joint initiative ICRAF-ILRI. S
* For the knowledge and management protocol, Martha going to Sinana and it will tie in with a symposium (with …??? University) for which Martha is preparing a paper with Peter, Kindu, Aster and hopefully Steffen. The focus is ‘moving from theory to practice on sustainable intensification’.

**ICRISAT**

* From our site, we are trying to bring the inputs together. Some are not available in the country (e.g. micro-nutrients); we are working with Awassa University to select students to work on the ground.

**ICARDA**

* Hoping to finalise the protocol.

**ILRI**

* Most team members have been trained.
* In Lemo, separate update meeting with University, extension services.
* Same program with D/Birhan Uni, extension services etc. Very good discussion with partners.
* Did some work on irrigated fodder – around 70 sheep distributed for farmers (for fattening) in different sites around Lemo. Farmers produce irrigated fodder in March-April, in May they received sheep and we have started the sheep fattening program for 2 weeks. The data we record look at weight gain, feed consumption. Data this week is very encouraging: sheep gaining 200g / day.
* We did a half-day meeting with experts from various CG centres, Areka Agr. Research Centre and Awassa University. Good experience sharing and drafted protocol. Various issues (see presentation): IPM, livestock feed, value chain…
* During the trip around sheep fattening, wondering about our research protocol: how are we going to say that irrigated fodder is a better solution vs others etc.? 🡪 We initiated this project with irrigated fodder not as main feed but as supplement. With that supplement, we improve the performance of animals (and farmer income) through increased digestibility/palatability… We will do a cost-benefit analysis and even without any control, farmers will come evaluate this pilot project. This feed type is woman-friendly in as far as women are very interested in managing this. We’re trying to learn and have learnt a lot about this. There is no control but we are trying to work out economics of sheep fattening vs. growing e.g. onions. This is in collaboration with the ILSSI project, which will have a much more robust design.

**Agenda item 3: Next plan**

The next months will be critical for all of us because it will be planting months. The issue will be that almost everyone is interested in going there and the visiting frequency will be much higher. We need to coordinate this.

Yes! Simret has already mentioned we need to share our program. We need to pull our resources (e.g. vehicles)...

Partners need to submit their plan.

For Bale, we need to use transport.

Steffen: In this context, we are all getting prepared for the planting of these trials. What is the role of site coordinators in terms of organising the trials? Will this be split across us? Peter T. Is concerned that site coordinators collect all data. Protocol owners should organise the data collection with their staff and partners, and the coordinators should just facilitate. We now have 32 protocols.

In 2 weeks we’re going to Bale and ICARDA is in charge of farmer identification etc.

With regards to manpower, national partners are showing great interest in taking part in the implementation of these protocols (e.g. in Tigray).

Each protocol owner should share the protocol with partners on the sites so they can get involved and coordinators reduce their burden.

**Tilahun:** The issue of farmer compensation is sensitive. We shouldn’t go for financial compensation – the compensation is that improved crops bring more resources to the farmers. For a research activity it must be acceptable to compensate the risk of engagement. But there has to be an investment from both sides (researcher and farmer) and it needs to be clear.

**Alan** (there need to be investment from both sides with clear what the agreements are. (the parameters)

**Leoulseged**  
The farmers asked for compensation – if it fails below the normal we will compensate

**Kindu:**  
Our protocol might not be clear for the farmers

**Abeerra**   
They need to be tested in FTC before going to the farmers

**Agenda item 4: AOB**

Draft contracts: Peter received only 1 almost complete contract from ICRAF. Can others please finalise contracts, attach budgets and the protocols that will be implemented? The CIP one is also sent but is stuck somewhere in the process.

Site coordinators will also help facilitate administrative processes. Per diems have to be taken care of by ILRI too. We will have an administrative assistant to help with this kind of issues for Africa RISING and N2Africa.

We need CIMMYT reps to be involved in the small mechanization protocol. Different farmers were raising concerns about using them on vertisols – they were concerned about which farmers should be selected…

**Next Meeting : 26 June 2014, Sof Omar meeting room**